THE RIALTO AMMUNITION BACK-UP STORAGE POINT

In late 1942 or early 1943 the United States Army had a need for a major port of embarkation to supply the armed forces in the China Burma India Theater. Previously this had been accomplished thru the San Francisco Port of Embarkation in Oakland, California. This Port, however, was the major supply installation for all the forces in the Pacific and it was decided to separate this responsibility by setting up a Port of Embarkation in Wilmington, California to handle all supplies for the CBI Theater.

When this Port was formed it became necessary to have a secure facility for the loading of ammunition aboard vessels. A finger pier in Long Beach, Pier 'A' extension, was designated by the Coast Guard Captain of the Port as the ammunition loading facility. This pier to be known as Victory Pier was secure, could handle two vessels, and was equipped with a main rail line and two spurs. The rail cars with ammunition could be spotted on the spurs for off-loading of the ammunition to the dock and hence to the vessels being loaded.

There was a limit to the number of rail cars that could be held on the dock at any time, established by the Captain of the Port, for the safety of the harbor. This restriction thus required that a facility be established away from the Port in a safe area where ammunition laden rail cars could be held awaiting call to the Port for off-loading.

The need for this installation created the Rialto Ammunition Back-Up Storage Point located in the rocky area North of the town of Rialto, California. A spur line was run into the area with several lines spurring off the main spur. At intervals on each spur an earth and rock barricade was constructed to prevent an explosion from one car to set off another car. In addition to the 'explosion' barricades several secure magazines were constructed. In the event that a rail car could not be called to the Port for any reason the ammunition was unloaded from the rail car and stored in the magazines temporarily. This might occur if the loading of a vessel was delayed or for some remote possibility the need for the material was delayed.

The facility was staffed with a Captain in charge, an administrative assistant, secretary, clerk and warehouseman. The facility had a diesel engine switcher for moving the cars and a fork lift for moving material if required. Both the warehouseman and the Captain were qualified to operate the diesel engine.

The Ammunition Section of the Port Ordnance Office would plan the loading of a vessel based on the needs of the China Burma India Theater to restock their supplies. When a

vessel was scheduled in to be loaded, the Section would order the material released from Depots throughout the United States to be delivered to the RABUSP. When the cars were received they would be spotted at the barricades awaiting their call to the Port as needed. As the loading of the vessel continued the Ammunition Section at the Port would release specific cars. The RABUSP personnel would then make up the cars and switch them on to the main line siding of the Santa Fe railroad and call for an engine to transport them to the Port.

During the period of time that the Port of Embarkation was operating over 3.5 million tons of ammunition and explosives were shipped thru the Port and consequently thru the Rialto Ammunition Back-Up Storage Point without a single accident or mishap of any kind. This record was unequalled.

As Chief of the Ammunition Section, Ordnance Office of the Los Angeles Port of Embarkation from July 1943 to February 1946 I had technical supervision over the operation of the RABUSP and was proud of the record that was established.